

Summary

VSDB Consolidation Task Force Meeting

June 23, 2003

Alvin York Bandy Administrative Complex
Stafford County Public Schools

Present: Martha Adams (for Julie Stanley), Nancy Armstrong, Mary-Margaret Cash, Doug Cox (for Jo Lynne DeMary), Scott Goodman (chair), Emmett Hanger, Jr., Ronald Lanier, Glen Slonneger, Lisa Surber, and Malinda Washington (for Darlene White).

DOE staff: Karen Trump

Facilitator: Judy Burtner

Statement of purpose: Develop a plan of implementation for consolidating services for the deaf and/or blind and multi-disabled served by Virginia's two schools for these students

Objectives

1. Receive public comment
2. Receive and discuss background information and data
3. Create additional consolidation options
4. Identify additional data/information needs

Public Comment

Two speakers spoke during the public comment period:

- Leo Yates, alumni of VSDB-Staunton
 - Cindy Cooper, Hampton Public Schools
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Presentation of Requested Information/Data

The following information/data which had been requested at the June 3-4, 2003 Task Force meeting was presented:

- Information from a school division that both serves students that are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/vision impaired and sends students to one or both of the Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind – Christine Lebo, Fairfax County Public Schools. (Ms. Lebo distributed a handout describing Fairfax's services so a summary of her comments is not included here). Requests were made from Task Force members for additional information. Ms. Lebo stated she would provide it.
- K. Trump presented information on the following matters:

- Credentials currently required for VSDB staff
 - Current staff credentials and recommended staff performance ranges for the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview that will be implemented this fall for both schools to evaluate staff proficiency with ASL
 - Definitions of least restrictive environment (LRE), Individualized Education Program (IEP), Special Education, and Specially Designed Instruction
 - The questions to be used in interviews with special education administrators to identify the factors for placement at VSDB reported by placing school divisions
 - VSDB Admissions Process
 - Why students leave the VSDBs, July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003
 - State SOL Performance Rates for students with hearing and visual impairments: Grade 3 state level SOL pass rates, Grade 5 state level SOL pass rates, Grade 8 state level SOL pass rates, selected end-of-course state level SOL pass rates
 - Number of children from military families served at the VSDBs
 - Building space at each school and considerations for serving all students at either site
 - Transportation arrangements at both schools along with transportation schedules and routes.
- Dr. Armstrong and Ms. Washington presented funding and expenditure data for each school
 - Dr. Armstrong and Ms. Washington presented information on the residential experience at each school. Printed materials from both schools were included in the meeting packet highlighting student activities.

Handouts were included in the Task Force members' packets so a summary of the above information is not included in this report.

Identification of Additional Data/Information Needs

Members identified the following data/information needs:

- An assessment be conducted of the accessibility to buildings at both sites. DOE will contract for the assessment.
- Are there other sites more centrally located that would be suitable to serve the students currently at the two schools? D. Cox will research this issue.
- Post-secondary outcome data on vision impaired students/adults maintained by the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired – to be provided by G. Slonneger
- Information from local divisions on their capacity to mainstream the students at the two schools back to local schools
- How many local divisions have programs similar to Fairfax's program (presented earlier in the session)?

- Are there differences in outcomes between students that have been mainstreamed in public schools and students at the two schools?
- Are there alternative uses for schools or for some portion of the space at the schools? M. Adams will research the need for residential services for students served by the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) last year; the number of students that needed residential care that left the state for it, the cost to the state for their care and the conditions for which they were treated. K. Trump will provide a summary of alternative building usage as proposed in previous studies of the issue.

Tentative Options Reviewed

The tentative options for consolidation developed at the June 3-4 session were reviewed:

- Leave both schools open but with changes – downsized, opening up space for other entities, upgrade for certain groups of students, etc.
- Consolidate to one of the current facilities
- Close both and relocate to another location
- Close both schools, download functions to regional, local divisions
- Close the high school and consolidate the elementary school
- Eliminate the element of blind, visually impaired and serve only deaf and hard-of-hearing
- Schools serve as technical education centers to local divisions

No other options were proposed.

Questions were raised that need to be addressed if possible in the context of narrowing the list of options:

- Does there have to be a residential program?
- Should the state be involved or should these students be referred back to local divisions for service?
- Will local divisions be prepared for these students should they go back to local divisions?
- What state support is available to local divisions to support the education of these students should they go back to the divisions?
- What will happen to students who need residential services if they go back to local divisions?
- Will all divisions have the resources to address the needs of these students? (the Fairfax County situation versus rural areas)
- How would the students' need for adaptive training be provided if not available at centers/local school divisions?
- Do all local divisions have services such as signing available to support the students who need it?
- Where are the students who presently do not participate in the residential component receiving non-academic services?

- Do the schools presently offer state-of-the-art services to the students? State-of-the-art would include the following options: 1) oral, 2) cued speech, 3) ASL, and 4) oral-aural (cochlear implant). How does Virginia compare with other states in offering all of the above options?
- What should the program at both schools include? Should they include the four options listed above?
- Why do some parents choose prefer a residential school and others don't? (question for parent focus groups)
- What should "we" (State Operated School) be in the business of doing for these children?
- Are there students who would prefer to stay at the school on weekends instead of traveling back to their homes?
- There are numerous options for non-disabled students in communities. What options exist for hearing impaired and visual impaired children without a residential component?

Next Meeting – July 31, 2003, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Charlottesville area

The agenda will include the following items:

- Public comment
- Report of additional information/data requested at 6/23/03 session
- Review – focus group results and public comment
- Discussion – Implications of what have heard – data/information shared at previous two meetings, focus group results, public comment
- Discussion – "consolidation of services"
- Additional options created (to be added to list of existing options)
- Working with the options
- Selection of options to be explored further
- Agenda for August 27 Task Force session

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